

Does Your School

Are your children getting the education they need?

All parents should ask themselves if their children are getting the education they need to compete and succeed in school and in life. For too many children in too many schools, the answer today is no.

- In hundreds of high schools in America, fewer than half of the students graduate. In today's economy, there are few good options for high school dropouts.
- In thousands of elementary and middle schools, large numbers of children are one, two or even three years behind their grade level in reading, math and other subjects. Many of them never catch up.

You don't have to accept underperforming schools.

All across America, skilled principals, teachers and school staff are working with committed and involved parents to turn low-performing schools into models of educational excellence. Typically, the changes involve some of the following elements:

- Strong school leaders who create a culture of high expectations for students and staff alike;
- A professional learning culture where teachers can analyze data about their students' performance, collaborate within and across grades and subjects, plan and revise lessons, and offer special help to meet students' needs;
- Curricula and instruction that provide a well-rounded education;
- More learning time during the afternoons, weekends and summers;
- Meaningful parent engagement and strong community partnerships; and
- Student supports that address social, emotional and health needs.

need a fresh start?

Up to \$6 million per school in *new* federal funds can help transform your child's education!

The U.S. Department of Education is offering states billions of dollars over three years in School Improvement Grants to help improve America's lowest-performing schools. This is in addition to the local, state and federal funds that your schools already receive.

To compete for these new funds:

- Your **state** must identify your school as one of its lowest performers. Your principal or superintendent will know your school's status. This information will be on your state department of education's website and at the U.S. Department of Education's website listed at the end of this brochure.
- Your **superintendent** must apply to the state for the money.
- Your **school** must be willing to change.

School and community leaders can choose various improvement models.

Schools that demonstrate the greatest need and the strongest commitment to reform will get the resources they need to improve—but only if they are willing to make dramatic changes around school leadership and teaching. Specific intervention models include:

- **Transformation:** The school district appoints a new principal to work with the existing teaching staff, providing professional development and other supports to improve instruction. The school must also introduce a new curriculum and increase learning time.
- **Turnaround:** The school district appoints a new principal who builds a new teaching staff, introduces a new curriculum and increases learning time. Up to half of the existing teachers can be rehired but the other half must be new teachers recruited specifically to work in the turnaround school.
- **Restart:** The school district converts the school into a new school or closes and reopens a school under an independent organization, such as a successful charter school operator, charter management organization or education management organization selected through a rigorous review process.
- **School closure:** The school district closes the school and enrolls the students in other higher-achieving schools nearby.

It's up to school leaders—working closely with parents, teachers and their communities—to select the approach that works best for their students.

Local schools are choosing to use their additional funds in many different ways.

Some are lengthening the school day, and offering tutoring, mentoring and other services after school to help students. Some are hiring new teachers to provide additional services. Some are partnering with community agencies to provide the health care and social supports that will help students thrive in the classroom. Each school has flexibility to design specific reforms that will work best for its students.

Expect more, get more.

Parents and community members can help ensure that their local school districts make the most of these additional federal funds.

- Learn about the possibilities. Our website has much more information about the specifics of this school improvement program, as well as videos and other examples of successful turnaround schools. Visit the site listed at the end of this brochure.
- Work with your superintendent's office to learn more about the specific plan for your school. Ask for the data on student performance at your school.
- Work with other parents to support and help shape the changes in your school. The U.S. Department of Education is encouraging states and districts to involve parents and community members in making these changes work.
- Demand excellence. Your child deserves a great education. Set high standards for your child ... and your school.
- Schools such as West Carter Middle School in Olive Hill, Ky., George Hall Elementary in Mobile, Ala., the Academy for Urban School Leadership schools in Chicago, and Mastery Charter Schools—Pickett, Shoemaker and Thomas in Philadelphia have gone from being some of the worst in their cities to among the best. If schools like these are making such strong progress, other schools should be able to do the same.

We're offering up to \$6 million per school over three years—which is a lot of money—over and above what they normally receive. Our resources can help pay for better curriculum, incentives for staff, and more learning time. What they cannot buy, however, is courage, and that is what is needed to succeed. And that's where you come in.

—U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, July 14, 2010, speech to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

If a school isn't producing graduates with even the most basic skills—year after year after year after year—something needs to be done differently. ... If we want success for our country, we can't accept failure in our schools decade after decade.

—President Barack Obama, July 29, 2010 remarks at the National Urban League Centennial Conference

For more information:

To find out more information on the School Improvement Grants program, visit the U.S. Department of Education's website at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html> or call toll-free 1-800-USA-LEARN.

